



## **The Demystification of the Concept of Homeland in the Hungarian Literature from Vojvodina**

Erika BENCE

University of Novi Sad  
Department of Hungarian Studies  
erikazambo@eunet.rs

**Abstract.** The demystification of the cultic meaning of the homeland started already in the disillusionist Romanticism in Hungarian literature. The twentieth century modulates and enriches the thematization of the phenomenon with meanings of loss(es) of homeland within the framework of Hungarian literary representation from Vojvodina. In this context the meaning of homeland has been completed with the codes of the Trianon memory, the nostalgia for the Monarchy, the Balkan consciousness, the quest for the home/homeland, the language swap, the border novel as well as the figures of foreignness.

The change and degradation of the concept of homeland is thematized in theory/essay as well as in poetic/narrative discourses, in poems as well as in prose in the Hungarian literature from Vojvodina.

The analysis focuses on Károly Jung's (1944) poetry from the end of the twentieth century, above all, on his volumes of poems entitled *Barbaricum* (1991) and *Hephaestus the Grouch* [*Mogorva Héphaisztosz*] (2002) respectively; the time gap between their publication also marks the historical time of a poetic formation determined by social-historical factors; its formation also embedded in tradition, as well as its tendencies directed at deconstructing traditional contents (myths and cultic meanings) are indicated and created by its trope structure, allusive sign system and transcultural figures.

**Keywords:** Hungarian literature from Vojvodina, deheroization, homeland/loss of homeland, border novel, tropes of deficiency, foreignness

## Historical aspects

(*Creating homeland and heroism.*) The identification with the Homeland in its mythical-cultic sense, as well as the insecurity, change and disappearance of a (baroque) world view and form of existence based on such a kind of organicity is reflected in our nineteenth-century ode poems as one of the most important contents of new Hungarian literature: “Our homeland shed champions’ blood against other peoples / Its creator, *Árpád* on the banks of the Danube. / Oh! it were other Hungarians / whom our great *Hunyadi* repelled the power of Mahomet with!” [“Más néppel ontott bajnoki vért hazánk / Szerzője, *Árpád* a Duna partjain. / Oh! más magyarral verte vissza / Nagy *Hunyadink* Mahomet hatalmát!”] (Dániel Berzsenyi: *To the Hungarians I. [A magyarokhoz I.]*) Or: “Coming forth the land to spy, / Even a home he finds he lacks” [“... Szerte nézett 's nem lelé / Honját a 'hazában.”] (Ferenc Kölcsey: *National Anthem [Hymnus]*).

In line with this world comprehension experience both patriotism as well as defending it unconditionally (being ready to sacrifice one’s life for it) are moral categories, whereas the heroism of “acquiring a homeland” becomes the highest ethical merit: accordingly, creating a homeland is the greatest epic standard and the most heroic quality. It is no accident that – based on the Hegelian views – we regard the epic as a world literature genre about a nation’s birth, and the process of estrangement from it in terms of world view and genre as a world and genre building phenomenon of deheroization. This process – although thematized only in Romantic literature – started very early, with the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, considered by Northrop Frye as belonging to “the second epic tradition.” According to this theory, the classical Homeric epic (the *Iliad*) is the genre of an organic-heroic-poetic world state and of an original-uniform existence. The *Odyssey* is the epic of the ceasing of this world state, of trivialized existence already, more precisely, it is its altered version, an epopeia. The motif of migration (quest) appears in the *Odyssey* for the first time, then in the *Aeneid*, which is based upon the worldview of the Homeric epics. At the endpoint of the historic process of distancing from the classical epopeias we can find – and this is the young György Lukács’s theory of the novel (Lukács 1975) – novels written in prose, and their basic types respectively, *Don Quixote* [1605], the novel of abstract idealism; *Sentimental Education* [1869], the novel of disillusioned Romanticism, and *Wilhelm Meister* [1796], the novel of formation.

In his theory of myth criticism Northrop Frye conceives the formation history of encyclopedic forms originating in the epic worldview in terms of spatial topoi. Here as well, the three basic forms are the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*:

The cyclical form of the classical epic is based on the natural cycle as well as on the known mediterranean world in the middle of the boundlessness

(*apeiron*) and between the upper and the lower gods. The cycle has two main rhythms: the life and death of the individual, and the slower social rhythm which, in the course of years (*periplomenon eniauton* at Homer, *volvibus* or *labentibus annis* at Virgil), brings cities and empires to their rise and demise. The full comprehension of the latter is the privilege of gods. It begins the action *in medias res*, and with this convention it ties a knot in time, so to say. The full action which forms the background of the *Iliad* moves from the Greek cities through the ten-year siege of Troy back to Greek cities again; the full action of the *Odyssey* is a specific example of the same thing: from Ithaca back to Ithaca. The *Aeneid* moves with the household gods of Priam from Troy to New Troy. (Frye 1998, 275)

(*Creating a new Homeland, a new Troy.*) One of the most complete forms of the encyclopedic-archetypical structures is the Bible, likewise with the “heroic quest” in the centre, that is, with the figure of an individual identifying himself as the hero, who sets out on his quest as the “psychological representation of the novel-like world fallen apart” and – due to his heroic qualities and the high standard of his moral virtues – temporarily reestablishes the unity of the disintegrated world order in order to create a new Homeland, a new Troy. This gesture of creation does not necessarily refer to the heroic struggle in the objectual-empirical-factual world, but to the proclamation of the birth of certain ideologies and spiritual values (for example, in the artist-novel: in the text of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, in which, by evoking the Middle Ages, Novalis depicts a mystical-symbolical, consequently a still uniform universe [“a universal idyll”]. Contrary to this, the actual time of narration marks the fragmentary, disharmonious forms of existence, which can only be unified again through the creative power of imagination, through the magic moments of poetry. In the religious-mystical-symbolical world of the Middle Ages we can recognize the authentic medium of the birth of the world-creating, universal poetry.).

(*Deheroization and loss of homeland.*) In the formation of the nineteenth-century construct of the authentic Hungarian (historical) novel – as the birth of the genre coincides with the constellation of the historical novel, of the discourse about history – the poetic discourse of the ode from the beginning of the century in its larger sense (including the classical ode, the anthem, the appeal and the dithyramb) played an important role: the layers of meaning rendering the past and confronting past with present of Berzsenyi’s, Kölcsey’s and Vörösmarty’s oeuvre let us perceive the processes of deheroization in the present through emblematic examples of heroic qualities creating a homeland, a new Troy. On the one hand, in these modes of speech we can find the example of the great hero, who reestablishes the organic unity and sacrifices himself for the national community, that of home-creating heroic-divine quality, of “Bendegúz’s blood” that won a “beautiful

homeland” (*National Anthem*), of the homeland-flourishing “heroic offsprings of Árpád” (*National Anthem*), that of Árpád, who gained a homeland through the “champion’s blood” and that of “Our great *Hunyadi*” (*To the Hungarians I.*). On the other hand, the idea of the “wonderful things” that “not the crowd, but the Soul and the free nation” achieved (Dániel Berzsenyi: *To the Hungarians II.*), the image of the “homeland in pain” (Ferenc Kölcsey: *Zrínyi’s Second Song*) attacked and bitten by “kites, snakes, worms,” ravaged by “Morals: disgusting vipers/returned to perish” (*To the Hungarians I.*) flow into Vörösmarty’s image of the homeland struck by “the curse of hatred among brethren” (*People*), into his visionary poetry about the death of a nation, into the definition of the homeland of the distanced romantic irony, into the realization of “deheroic heroes” and of a grey age, leading to modern literature, in the second half of the nineteenth century, leading to the cultivation/revival of the disillusioned Romanticism of the age, of the Hungarian decadent poetry from the end of the century, as well as of the Hungarian historical novels written in verse rendering an ironic image of the hero and the world, presenting the process of deheroization.

The phenomenon and event system that generates the loss of heroism and homeland (the nineteenth-century historical novel, which leads up to modern Hungarian literature, also touches upon this subject) – besides the disappearance of the moral value system of heroism – also contains and thematizes the motifs of lack of intellectual power. Let us just think of József Eötvös’s *Dózsa*-novel, which presents us the image of a hero who cannot find intellectual answers to the past’s crises and the present’s questions, and thus, provokes a catastrophe in his country. This is also the case with Kálmán Mikszáth’s quasi-historical novels, where the narrow-minded violence notions deconstructing the Zrínyi- and Rákóczi myths suggest similar home and hero demystifying meanings.

## **Hungarian Literature in Vojvodina**

(*The Trianon trauma: the actually unfolding event of losing one’s homeland.*) In 1920 the Hungarian literature built upon the above-mentioned rhetorical-poetic tradition is confronted with the Trianon trauma, namely with the real spiritual contents of the loss of one’s homeland and its factual events manifested in space. The experience of losing one’s homeland and getting into a spiritual void brings to life a series of legends and experiments trying to create a spiritual home, a “new Troy” within the literatures that got to the other side of the political borders and became peripheries, such as the literature from the Southern region/Yugoslavia/Vojvodina.

The opening momentum of the events brought to life by the trauma of losing one’s homeland is the legend of Géza Csáth, who had chosen to die on the borderline. Another literary reflection is Ildikó Lovas’s Vojvodina-novel entitled

*Exit to the Adria* [Kijárat az Adriára] (2005), which thematizes the sea-metaphor specific of the Hungarian literature of the region, and deconstructs the illusion of a home built upon this topic:

This sea-affair beats me. Until when those from Bácska possessed a sea, how long they have not had it any longer, or vice versa and from the start again. I have handled it so many times and from so many perspectives. I used to work myself into many small details, and in the end I wouldn't want any of it. (...) I don't give a damn about the Adria. (...) In the end we shall discover that Csáth proceeded in the most elegant manner: he finished it off where we truly belong to: on the border, nowhere, with our heads sunk into the sand. (...) But metaphors will hit back. They hit you on the head, ungrateful carrions. (Lovas 2005, 267)

After Trianon the literature of the region was definitely, and for a period also irreconcilably peripheralized within the Hungarian literature (as a whole) divided into a center and regions. In 1924 the taking into account, the ranking, the demand to size up the possibilities led to the publication of the *First Almanac of Hungarian Writers from Vojvodina* [Vajdasági magyar írók almanachja I.], edited by János Dettre and Imre Radó. Its publication was followed by several anthologies with literary-political tendencies (to “construct” a spiritual home after having lost the homeland), accompanied not only by – mostly negative – critiques, but also by negating-vindictory polemics regarding the existence of literature (the spiritual home) in becoming, by conceptual turnabouts (for example, János Dettre's or Szenteleky's changes in conviction). The lack-context of the loss of homeland, and the demand to create a new spiritual Home placed Kornél Szenteleky into the role of “Kazinczy from Vojvodina,” “our literary grandfather” (the home founder), and brought to life the theory of the couleur local, of the separatedness of the “new Homeland.”

When in 1929 Kornél Szenteleky wrote the novel *Isola Bella*, the first Hungarian short story anthology from Vojvodina, *Under Locust-trees* [Ákácok alatt] (1933), demonstrating the couleur local phenomenon, had not been published yet. In Szenteleky's novel – in opposition to the magic world represented by the beautiful island of Sicily – we can observe the firm contours of peripheral existence, the Vojvodina-experience, traumatic both in its spatial and in its intellectual contents (homeland/losing one's homeland):

(...) people with acrid faces are shuffling along under the cloudy sky. Unhappy souls are going round the ugly, muddy streets along the wet walls, perhaps someone is preparing a loop for himself in the attic. (...) Economic crisis. (...) bent, wrinkled people are sitting at the desks, if the phone rings,

they answer rudely and unwillingly (...) burden, roughness, impatience (...) mean intents are staggering in the brain convolutions. The puny locust trees haven't even begun to blossom yet, the roses have frozen again this winter. (...) Beauty steers clear of this sluggish, indifferent landscape, just like a singing wedding ship does of a lepers' island. (Szenteleky 1993, 187)

(*The loss of homeland as a genre constituting motif: the culture-historical novel and the border novel.*) Among the genre constituting elements of the historical novel we can find the poetics of questions projected into the past “with an interest in the present,” as well as the role of the past's otherness in constituting meaning and in crisis modeling. After Trianon the Hungarian historical narrative in Vojvodina underwent a long formative process naturally highlighting these constructive procedures, which resulted in a certain type of historical novel especially accepted in the region, the so-called “channel novel” interpreted as a culture-historical novel, and in a fully specific genre, that of the “border novel.”

It is well-known that after Szenteleky's two late-secessionist (space)-novels, *Whining Love* [*Kesergő szerelem*] and *Isola Bella*, both reflecting upon the Kisfaludy-topic, the development of the Hungarian novel in Vojvodina was either deficient/elliptic or insignificant: beside the visionary short story, at the end of the fifties and among the literary processes of the sixties the Hungarian novel in Vojvodina was recreated.

At the same time, the few experiments still taking place firmly reflect upon the experience of losing one's spatial/spiritual homeland: the past events are put to work in order to render meaning, mainly figuratively, in metaphors. One of them is Károly Molter's novel entitled *Tibold Márton* (1937), which presents the common destiny of the ethnic groups living along the Ferenc-channel as a vision of a spiritual home; the other one is Mihály Majtényi's *The Caesar's Channel* [*Császár csatornája*] (1943), which renders the failure story of the Central-European revolutionary (the Jacobean ideas), of the creative genius's (József Kiss, the imperial water engineer) intellectual creative enterprises, of the enlightened creator's ideals (to build a channel to improve the life of the community in the region). In a “petrified” empire, where the “emperor's endless power” (Majtényi 1943, 222) is based upon the machinery of informers and on the rule of militarist circles, there is no need for world-redeeming plans or creative ideas any longer. Together with József Kiss they are driven to the periphery of existence, and turn up again only rarely, from the dreamland of former revolutionaries, convicts emerging from casemates. “The minute which can be experienced, recognized, the moment is life and not the year!” (Majtényi 1943, 230) – these are József Kiss's last thoughts concerning the world: the credo of modern man.

In the second half of the twentieth century Nándor Gion's novels – the reconstituted Hungarian historical novel from Vojvodina (mainly the tetralogy

known under the title *He Played for Malefactors, Too* [*Latroknak is játszott*], written through several decades, between 1973 and 2002) show how the illusion of the homeland (manifesting as both an individual-human as well as a national community space), in which national communities can live together, disappears in great history, among the events of World War II devastating this area as well. In the third part, entitled *This Day is Ours* [*Ez a nap a miénk*], published in 1997, the narrative of creating a homeland, the new Home, then that of its loss, presenting the disillusionment in the homeland-concept is especially strong. When in 1941, on Easter Sunday, the Hungarian army arrives at Szenttamás, the story of reconstructing the homeland (concept) (the establishment of a new Troy) repeats itself almost as an echo, and connects to different historical/sacred interpretations: “This day is ours” – the participants in the events exclaim. Individual fate becomes history, as underlined by the possessive form of the sentence; the demonstrative pronoun has a specifying value. István Rojtos Gallai, the main character narrating the story, asks: How long will it last? – his question raises the emblematic affirmation towards a more abstract level of interpretation, which connects the roll-back to the story of the conquest/creating a homeland. “For thousand years. We have been here for thousand years, and we are going to stay for another thousand” (Gion 1997, 12). This is also a reply to Ádám Török’s ironic remark: “(...) what if this lovely day should not last for a thousand years after all” (Gion 1997, 24). What Rojtos Gallai says, will be spelled out in common talk: “They say this day is ours. We are Hungary again” (Gion 1997, 27). Later on, it is the same Rojtos Gallai who draws the bitter morals from the situation, and then gives metaphors for the interpretation: “It is a pity that the wonderful thousand years did not even last for four years” (Gion 1997, 176). The wealthy Serb farmers formulate this in a similar way: “What have we done to God that He should pour down such hard times upon us?” (Gion 1997, 200). The conversation with the Germans bears the same moral: “We all knew that this dirty war would come to an end soon. It would not end the way we would have wanted it to, but still it would come to an end” (Gion 1997, 240).

The definition “dirty war” plays the role of creating meaning. This will be the essential content of István Rojtos Gallai’s historical experience: the liberating war, having distorted into racial-national intolerance and ideologies, is not the depository of a lasting freedom but it will trigger an even dirtier world. As the narrator interprets it:

The war came to an end, the rotation of the world slowed down, but it was still in motion, and in its slow motion it could be really seen how ugly our world had become; it had not been much prettier earlier either, yet we had sometimes succeeded in making it more enthusiastic, more generous, even proud, as there were good days and good years to come that would stand colouring, however, paint always runs out when most needed, and the people who feel at home

among the beautiful colours, and who from time to time paint wonderful pictures, will go away. They go away leaving grey patches behind. The world has defaced itself; it will be hard to love it again. (Gion 1997, 241)

(*Life on the Periphery.*) The notion of “periphery” is also one of the meaning constituting factors in the Hungarian literary culture from Vojvodina: it functions as a way of living and as a form of literary discourse. In literary circles they talk about *The Physiology of Peripheral Culture* (Szeli 1993); László Végel’s essay-novel was published under the title *Life on the Periphery* [*Peremvidéki élet*] in 2000, which through the destiny of Novi Sad tells the story of the decay of the multicultural city (as a possible form of existence). The uniform text organizing principle is represented by a spatial motif: particular segments of Novi Sad (streets, squares, buildings) and the related story of decay are presented. The negative processes pervading the whole society explain and decode the tragedy of Novi Sad. The fall of its culture based upon multiculturalism is analogous to the country’s catastrophe: “After Yugoslavia split up, Novi Sad’s tragedy unfolded: its bourgeois tradition was rooted in the ‘guilty’ nostalgia for the Monarchy, in the historical homelessness, that is, in a topos necessarily despised and labeled by the nation state as a hostile idea” (Végel 2000, 8).

The Novi Sad story ends in a cataclysmic picture: the city, thought of as a modern and multicultural citadel, sinks in the dark depth of the Balkan nation state, which the narrator completes and seals up with an even more thrilling and extreme reflection upon literary culture. The naïve citizen of the perished multicultural world becomes a homeless local patriot; his/her existence becomes peripheral forever, his/her literature belonging to a *no man’s land*. This interpretation (“no man’s land”), which is constantly and everlastingly reflected in the regional literature reduced from Yugoslavian to the literature of Vojvodina/Southern region (not as if the Yugoslavian had represented the authentic homeland-concept – but this will still be touched upon in what follows!), creates a genre specific of peripheral culture, namely the border novel. We regard Erzsébet Juhász’s *Border Novel* [*Határregény*] (2001), published posthumously, as the primary source, the genre-creating literary work.

The *Border Novel* combines the traditional methods of talking about history (such as the correspondence to causality, linearity and the different background narratives) with the metaphorization of the border-notion. It shares the particularity of historical novels, of rendering present crises through past models, achieved by *narrating and presenting the existential momentums of the political border changes*. The most concrete meaning of “border” in the texture of this novel denotes the administrative line between countries, in addition to this, we understand by it the imaginary boundary of the distance between the different identities: it is a historical establishment and a spiritual figure.



We may also address this literary work as a *family*, *travel* or *Trianon* novel. The political borders established and changed after World War I and II interfere in the destiny of the Patarcsics family by delimitation and exclusion: the family members lose touch with each other; they get stuck inside and outside the borders, and repeatedly go through the deterrent experience of losing their homeland and identity. In addition to the political borders, they also raise imaginary barriers around themselves: Ella, Emi's mother (Emi represents the narrator's perspective) is unable to show the smallest sign of love towards the members of her family, for her, being immersed in the spiritual activity of painting represents the form of isolation from the others.

The series of the narrated border stories starts with Angeline Nenadovits, who in 1910 was travelling by tram in Novi Sad for a whole day (this moment is also projected onto the lives of her descendants), and afterwards would not leave her room for at least twenty years. After losing two of her sons in the war, Sándor Sajtos's mother veils herself into silence. The tragedy of Lina Rösch from Temesvár [Timișoara] stems from emotional distances as well as from the feeling that these (imaginary) barriers cannot be bridged. The regional life stories are predestined by an anecdote; it was written about Temesvár that this would be the Siberia of the Monarchy, where people are brought to die, or "Once arrived here, one could no longer leave. Or else way around: one could move but only to the other world" (Juhász 2001, 69).

The experience of *losing one's homeland* caused by the changes of political borders triggered traumas that determined the destiny of generations, especially that of the Patarcsics brothers. Miklós, who lives in Szabadka [Subotica] and János, stuck in Pozsony [Bratislava], share the same vision for decades: they get lost in Rogina bara – which at the time of narration no longer exists – and cannot find their way out, feeling tortured because of the impossibility of the situation. Besides being separated from his brother – as the offspring of a multinational family –, Miklós is characterized by a specific lingual-national identity crisis: in opposition to the Rösch's, the family branch living in Temesvár – where multinationalism creates multicultural wealth – his multilingual family community creates tensions. For a man confused by the lack of national self-esteem, experiencing Hungarian identity would mean reaching a safe haven; when in 1944 the Russians march into Szabadka, he fears that after several decades of insecurities and alienation, his sufferings will increase because now he will have to declare himself a Russian.

János Patarcsics's wife from Pozsony relates in a dramatic manner the most powerful manifestation of the Trianon trauma: she tells the story of how one day she had to shake hands with three hundred pupils leaving school, after which she herself became redundant in the school.

A phenomenon specific of the life stories on the periphery is recurrence. Emi, the late descendant experiences the same break in unity and continuity (as Angeline

Nenadovits, the Patarcsics brothers or Ila Sajtos) in 1990, when her husband, having a Southern Balkan view – who does not know the feeling of nostalgia for the Monarchy, and consequently does not possess the consciousness of peripheral existence –, emigrates. Similarly to Angeline Nenadovits regarding her love in 1910, she herself knows that the plan to get reunited with her husband is a lie, they will never live together again. We can encounter here the unique moment of fate specific of peripheral existence: the stubborn ones who stay are those who have lost their homeland, those who do not find their home in the country, whereas the representatives of the majority, taken into the graces of the nation-state, leave without loss of identity or any feeling of alienation, and are at home anywhere in Europe.

The members of the Patarcsics family overcome homelessness and constrained separatedness (the lack of organic unity) by travelling. The narration starts from Újvidék [Novi Sad] then it roams about the places of the former Monarchy coiling the far-reaching threads of the complex family history, and finally it ends on the Vienna Express with a grotesque, yet symbolic punchline: a somewhat disturbed member of the family suddenly and unconsciously starts running on the rushing train “as if mauled about by some unknown, gigantic force. Maybe the same force that had mauled about his ancestors, throughout generations, from Graz to Szabadka, from Szeged to the valley of Isonzo, from Temesvár to Pozsony, from Újvidék to Arad, to and fro, randomly” ( Juhász 2001, 94).

(“*One’s home in the homeland ...*” or: “*There is where to escape from ...*”) “It has been finally uttered / it has made us wait for long / there is where to escape from / but there is nowhere to” – Nothing proves better that József Gulyás’s quatrain entitled *Finally [Végre]*, written in the early 1970s, has become an experience passed on from generation to generation, than the fact that the text got deteriorated, which suggests its oral form of existence and the oral character of the process of transmission. The original version is as follows:

Végre kimondhatod,	You can say finally
várattott soká:	it has been long delayed:
van honnan szökni,	there is where to escape from,
de nincs hová.	but there is nowhere to.

In other words, for several generations this poem expressed the double feeling of homelessness, experienced by the Hungarian individual from the Southern region fallen outside the political borders of Hungary (and supposedly this is the case with others fallen outside the borders too), felt on both sides of the border.

In the examined novel by Erzsébet Juhász we can realize and experience homelessness, the ironic, reversed and perverted event and thought manifestos of the demystifications of homeland as expressed in the lines “*not finding Home in the*

*Homeland*” and “*There is where to escape from, / but there is nowhere to...*” What confuses Emi are the thought of “our home” and its objectification as well as the country map. On the one hand, in her parents’ and grandparents’ stories there exists the image of a “far-away Hungary” (Juhász 2001, 16), on the other hand, in front of her there is a school atlas with a map of the country she was born into. Her bitter conclusion is that (after getting to know it) Hungary “had nothing to do with OUR HOMELAND, just as neither did the country she was born into and which finally fell apart, leaving behind the uncertainty concerning where its borders are, and how long they would stay where they are” (Juhász 2001, 16).

The prose of Ildikó Lovas, a generation younger, reflects upon this experience in a similar way:

A homeland in the heights, in the labyrinth of panties and recipes [the narrator suffered humiliation when her language use was ridiculed in the mother country; she asked for women’s trousers instead of panties and said recipe instead of prescription – E. B.]. (...) Which homeland? Everything was so complicated back then. My mother tongue was not adequate in either country. (...) A feeling of fucking shit, I can say. (Lovas 2005, 40)

In a generation novel *par excellence*, namely István Apró’s *Novel-Briquette* [*Regénybrikett*], published in 1993, the homeland concept and illusion of the region unfolded in the shadow of titoism are placed into an ironic light through the age-group perspective:

Good old times! The only thing that had value was money and we did not have to take great pains over anything else (e.g., national identity, objective history, natality, etc.) ... Under the cherry trees they would have treated each and every rumour about show trials, witch-hunts with indignation. (Apró 1993, 15)

(“*I used to be a citizen, I became a citizen of dreams ...*”) At the end of the twentieth century Károly Jung’s poetry, built upon old forms and poetic traditions (antiquity myth, barbarity and civilization, Roman elegies, sonnets, fugues, archaisms, folk poetry, superstition, etc.) effectively shows us the historical and synchronic processes of demystification regarding the regional concept of homeland (and other related notions, such as patriotism, homeliness, etc.). In his 1991 volume entitled *Barbaricum* we are presented with the historical crisis models of becoming homeless and experiencing despoliation (the feeling of being “homeless in the homeland”): the legend of the barbarian plundering a mature civilization (e.g., Rome), the significance of war, of narrow-minded violence that tramples down culture. “And opposite the limes (where the moans / reach up to the sky) the barbarian lies in ambush” [“S a limesszel szemben (ahol felérnek / a jajok

az évig) a barbár áll lesben”] (*Barbaricum*); “Yet – as it is well-known – to Rome / many roads run, everyone // seeks refuge for oneself / out of the way of thorn-bushes, / rank grass, drifting weed, / transgressing, with hands in the pocket / foreign dirt, tales” [“Mégis – mint köztudott – Róma / Felé sok utak futnak, keres // Is hát magának ki-ki menedéket / Ballangók, gazok, sodródó dudva / Útjából, idegen koszt, meséket / Áthágva, kezét zsebébe dugva.”] (*The Fasting Winds are Blowing* [*Fújnak a böjti szelek*]); “We already know, we have learnt that: armies / have marched through this land, / the din of horseshoes, the noise of armour on the lowland, / and at times even our horses give a snort. // Who dares to stay? The pitfall hides us now. / Who wouldn’t be alerted by the armies’ marching?” [“Mi már tudjuk, megtanultuk: hadak / Vonultak, vonulnak ezen a tájon, / Lópaták robaja, vértzaj a lapályon, / S olykor lovaink is felhorkannak. // Maradni ki mer? Elrejt most a verem. / Kit ne riasztana a hadak vonulása?”] (*The Marching of Armies* [*Hadak vonulása*]).

Strong intertextual allusions, on the one hand, world literature (Petrarchan sonnet), on the other hand, nineteenth-century poetic tradition (e.g., Hungarian ode poetry), as well as early twentieth-century poetic discourses (e.g., Babits’s poetry), and the barbaricum-legend presented in the 1991 volume contextualize the poems of the volume *Hephaestus, the Grouch* [*Mogorva Héphaisztosz*], published in 2002. Especially two poems, namely *In the Depths of Winter* [*Télvíz idején*] and *Song of the Homeland* [*Dal a hazáról*] focus upon the topic of losing one’s homeland, homelessness and concretize the spatial and spiritual meanings of homeland. The geographical coordinates of the homeland are situated – just as in the well-known Hungarian odes and hymns of the nineteenth century – “between the Danube and the Tisa” (*In the Depths of Winter*), “The no-name land, the Danube, the Tisa, green / Gardens, a region of fields, and that of stubborn // Peasants” [“A nevenincs föld, a Duna, Tisza, zöld / Kertek, rétek tájéka, meg a konok // Parasztoké”] (*Song of the Homeland*). In a conceptual sense it is a “land, / renamed by the centuries,” “a no-name land.” The notion of homeland itself is semantically extremely burdened, as part of speech polysemantic, stylistically extremely nuanced in both poems. On the one hand, it denotes a space well-defined geographically (“... the region [...] of the Danube, Tisa ...”), a historical establishment (“... land, / renamed by the centuries ...”), the place of existence of a social-national community (“[region] of stubborn / Peasants,” “Home / of staying crack-brained wanderers”), a cultic-sacred experience (“this land under my feet” [*Song of the Homeland*], a place where “Frozen to death in the earth the ancestors cry” [*In the Depths of Winter*]). On the other hand, it evokes meanings which induce notions of deficiency [being thrown about: “Poets are being thrown about in foreign places ...,” madness: “Madness is tempting me: to go home, home!,” emptiness: “The homeland will be empty between the Danube and the Tisa,” “The library, the manuscripts have been left to themselves,” “Man, the estate he finally

left to itself,” fault and sin; betrayal: “not to add to sinning, to almost betrayal” (*In the Depths of Winter*), further on, “he ran away in the fog;” “your running flock has left you alone,” “I could not sin more / not any longer. Who could understand the grief of the homeless?” (*Song of the Homeland*). It evokes tropes, the image constellation of metaphor and synecdoche in a spiritual sense: homeland as *tenor* attracts *vehicles* such as garden/field, house/shelter, book/library. Homeland denotes a concept (the form of existence of a social-national community), being a noun, but it can be a complement or an infinitive too (go/come home). Similarly to the nineteenth-century cultic poetry, Károly Jung’s concept of homeland gains a sacred connotation in *Song of the Homeland* (the image of the “sacred land”), it undergoes such a deconstructive process as the loss of homeland in the *Appeal* or in *Zrínyi’s Second Song* (the world of “mad mulberry trees,” of vagabonds and idiots). In a metaphorical context it gets personified: (“it ran away in the fog”), and it is marked by invocation and informal addressing.

The double entendre demystification of the homeland concept is thus also created in Károly Jung’s poems. On the one hand, there is a homeland which “spits out its flock into the frost” and which is no longer identical (as it is trodden by “fog, doom, death, war”) with the sacred shelter of our ancestors, nor with the intellectual refuge legitimizing poetry’s pantheon. On the other hand, there is the mother country, the “only homeland,” which is not welcoming either (“... who understands the sufferings of the homeless?”).

The feelings of a homeless person are sublimated in a staggeringly wonderful metaphor: “I used to be a citizen, I became a citizen of dreams / A dirty-grey sky melts above me ...” (*Song of the Homeland*).

To the same extent in which the two poems discussed above are characterized by the frequent use of repetition (the meaning of ‘homeland’ in its different variants), *Variations upon Pilinszky’s Quatrain, Postcard from Limány* [*Változatok Pilinszky négysorosára, Limányi anziksz*] [Limán/ *Limány* is a district in Novi Sad], built upon Pilinszky’s *Quatrain* [*Négysoros*], uses ellipsis/omission. The fourth part, having the subtitle *Nights Soaked in Poster-loneliness* [*Transscripcio et translatio textorum*] (*Plakátmagányban ázó éjjelek* [*Transscripcio et translatio textorum*]) is a picture poem, which by means of crossing out and deletion demonstrates the lack in the overlapping meanings of the home-homeland-shelter trio. Its bilingualism marks the happenings of the double homeland-deconstruction:

Ovo je Jugoslavija!  
Ovo je Srbija!  
Ovo je Vojvodina!  
Ovo je Liman!  
Ovo je zgrada!  
Ovo je kerov kurac!

---

Ez (itt) Jugoszlávia!	This is (here) <del>Yugoslavia!</del>
Ez (itt) Szerbia!	This is (here) <del>Serbia!</del>
Ez (itt) Vajdaság!	This is (here) <del>Vojvodina!</del>
Ez (itt a) Limány!	This is (here) <del>Limány!</del>
Ez (itt egy) épület!	This is (here) a <del>building!</del>
Ez (itt) a kutyék fasza!	This is (here) <del>bullshit!</del>

The possessive form of the last line in Hungarian (“a kutyék fasza”) is a somewhat milder version of the Serb dialect, which is more direct and a lot harsher. I believe I am not the only reader of the poem who thinks of the rhyming pairs “fasza” – “haza.” It could even generate a saying: “Kutyá fasza, a haza!”

*Translated by Vilma Mihály*

## Works cited

### Primary sources

- Apró István. 1993. *Regénybrikett. Brikettregény tizenkét kockában.* [Novel-Briquette. *Briquette Novel in Twelve Cubes.*] Novi Sad – Budapest: Forum – Interetnica Alapítvány.
- Berzsenyi Dániel Művei 1994. [*Dániel Berzsenyi's Works.*] Textcare, postscript and notes László Orosz. Budapest: Századvég.
- Gion Nándor. 1997. *Ez a nap a miénk.* [*This Day is Ours.*] Budapest: Osiris.
- Juhász Erzsébet. 2001. *Határregény.* [*Border Novel.*] Postscript by Faragó Kornélia. Novi Sad: Forum.
- Jung Károly. 1991. *Barbaricum. Fúgák és más versek.* [*Barbaricum. Fugues and Other Poems.*] Novi Sad: Forum.
- . 2001. *Mogorva Héphaisztosz. Utazás a merőlegesen: hattyúdalok, el- és leszámolások.* [*Hephaestus, the Grouch. Journey on the Perpendicular: Swan-Songs, Payoffs and Showdowns.*] Novi Sad: Forum.
- Kölcsey Ferenc. 2001. *Versek és versfordítások.* [*Poems and Translations.*] Ed. Szabó G. Zoltán. Budapest: Universitas.
- Lovas Ildikó. 2005. *Kijárat az Adriára.* [*Exit to the Adria.*] Bratislava: Kalligram.
- Majtényi Mihály. n.d. *Császár csatornája.* [*The Emperor's Channel.*] Budapest: n. p.
- Szeli István. 1993. *A peremkultúra élettana.* [*The Physiology of Peripheral Culture.*] Novi Sad: Forum – Akadémiai.
- Szenteleky Kornél. 1993. *Nyári délelőtt. Egybegyűjtött novellák regény 1923–1933.* [*Summer Morning. Collected Short Stories, Novel 1923–1933.*] Postscript by Bori Imre. Novi Sad: Forum.
- Végel László. 2000. *Peremvidéki élet.* [*Life on the Periphery.*] Novi Sad: Forum.
- Vörösmarty Mihály. 1984. *Összes Költményei.* [*Mihály Vörösmarty's Collected Poems.*] Budapest: Szépirodalmi.

### Secondary sources

- Bence Erika. 2009. *Másra mutató műfajolvasás. [Genre Reading Pointing at the Other.]* Budapest: Napkút – Cédrus Művészeti Alapítvány.
- Bori Imre. 1993. *A jugoszláviai magyar irodalom rövid története. [A Short History of the Hungarian Literature in Yugoslavia.]* Novi Sad: Forum.
- . 2007. *A jugoszláviai magyar irodalom története. [The History of Hungarian Literature in Yugoslavia.]* Novi Sad: Forum.
- Frye, Northrop. 1998. *A kritika anatómiája. [Anatomy of Criticism.]* Trans. József Szili. Budapest: Helikon.
- Imre László. 1996. *Műfajok létformája XIX. századi epikánkban. [Genres in Our Nineteenth-Century Narrative Literature.]* Debrecen: Kossuth UP.
- Lukács György. 1975. *A heidelbergi művészetfilozófia és esztétika. A regény elmélete. [The Heidelbergian Art Philosophy and Aesthetics. Theory of the Novel.]* Budapest: Magvető.
- Szegedy-Maszák Mihály and Hajdu Péter, eds. 2001. *Romantika: világgép, művészet, irodalom. [Romanticism: World View, Art, Literature.]* Budapest: Osiris.
- Toldi Éva. 2009. Az idegenség alakzatai. [Forms of Foreignness.] *Hungarológiai Közlemények* vol. 40 no. 3.: 84-93.